

## PPAG CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE AFRICA CHILD

Every child deserves to enjoy their childhood. The International Day of the African Child, is therefore observed on June 16th each year, as a powerful reminder of the critical importance of unlocking the full potential of African children, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds, gender or race. This year's celebration is themed '**THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT**' and seeks to sensitize the public and policy makers on the risks and opportunities of the digital environment. The Day of the African Child has since become the key tool used by the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG) to trumpet best practices and ideals that promote the rights of African children and their welfare issues especially in the area of reproductive health.



*IMAGE: An International Day of the African child event*

A study conducted by Ghana's Department of Children in 2018 revealed that out of the total number of 4,549 children interviewed, 9 out of 10 children have access to the internet with ages as low as 4 years and the highest being 15 years. This raises numerous concerns with this digital age, including cyberbullying, online predators, and exposure to very dangerous materials.

PPAG, through different project implementors urged children to patronize the Association's safe spaces for lessons on protection from harm and to ensure their safety online. The Association reiterated the purposeful use of its safe spaces by young people, whilst being enlightened on the dangers they face on the internet.

The celebration of the AU Day of the African Child (DAC) was instituted in 1991 and is to be celebrated on the 16th June of each year in memory of the children who died as a result of a students' uprising in Soweto, South Africa in 1976 against an apartheid regime.

## **WORLD MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY PRESS RELEASE BY PPAG**

World Menstrual Hygiene Day is observed on May 28. The main idea behind marking this day is to change the social stigma associated with menstruation. The date, May 28 was chosen to observe the day because on an average, the menstrual cycle for most women is 28 days and the menstruation period for most women is for 5 days. Hence, the date was kept as 28/5. Here is a press release from the PPAG marking the day.

# PPAG

## PLANNED PARENTHOOD ASSOCIATION OF GHANA

(Incorporated under the Companies Code, 1963, Act. 179)

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Sexual Health For Quality Life

To: All Media Houses  
For Immediate Release

### PLANNED PARENTHOOD ASSOCIATION OF GHANA COMMEMORATES MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY 2023

Accra 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2023

Menstruation is a natural fact of life and a human rights issue, not just a health one. Women or adolescent girls' ability to care for their bodies while menstruating is an essential part of this fundamental right. Poor menstrual health and hygiene therefore represents an affront to this right, including the right to school and work. Insufficient resources to manage menstruation, such as sanitary pads and clean water, worsen the already existing social and economic inequalities. It further undermines human dignity and attacks the confidence of girls and women.

The theme for Menstrual Hygiene Day this year is "**Making menstruation a normal fact of life by 2030**" for us as a Reproductive Health and Rights Organisation, it is a call for the execution of comprehensive approaches that combine education with infrastructure (washrooms) and sanitary products to surmount the hurdles that battle our efforts at achieving good menstrual health for adolescent girls and women.

The Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG) passionately appeals to Ghanaian schools, workplaces and public institutions to ensure that adolescent girls and women can manage menstruation with comfort and dignity while being productive.

Our aim is to contribute to the building of a fairer, healthier, gender-responsive Ghana that acknowledges and works towards achieving the vision of sanitation and hygiene under Goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals: "By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all, paying special attention to the needs of girls and women in vulnerable situations".

PPAG calls on Government to increase political priority and ignite action for menstrual health and hygiene. Policies that eliminate period poverty, especially for low-income women and girls who struggle to afford menstrual products and have limited access to water and sanitation services must be expedited. This starts with Government's declassification of sanitary pads as luxury products to end the 20 percent import charge it currently attracts. To the Ghanaian media, let us encourage open dialogue on menstruation. It is a great way to break period stigma and teach young people how to stay healthy and hygienic during menstruation.

END

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## PPAG AND UNFPA RETURN 10 ADOLESCENT MOTHERS SCHOOL

A total of ten adolescent mothers who dropped out of school have been sent back to school under the “**Adolescent Girls Return to School project**” being implemented by PPAG with funding from UNFPA.

The return to school policy initiated by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ghana Education Service (GES) was designed to offer opportunity for drop-out teenage mothers to return to school after delivery. With support from the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG) and the United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA), the beneficiaries received materials including diapers, washing soap, detergents, and antiseptics to help them care for their children back home after school.



***Image: The teenage mothers in pose with staff of PPAG and MOH***

They also received back-to-school materials such as school bags, exercise books, school uniforms, and shoes to equip them for school life. Addressing the beneficiaries in Kumasi, a Council Member of PPAG, Edmund Osei-Wusu revealed that the ten adolescent mothers from Tafo Parkrono, Krofrom, and Buokrom were identified from the communities, encouraged and assisted and returned to school. He noted that it is a core mandate of PAG to give reproductive health education and information to all persons especially vulnerable people. This is to ensure that they can live healthy lives irrespective of their challenges.

“As such, these teenage mothers have received the requisite sexual health education on family planning, contraceptives, and HIV education to secure their lives by preventing future unplanned pregnancies” he indicated.

To ensure these girls remained in school, the Girl Child Coordinator of Schools for the region will monitor their school activities. She was to ensure they reported and stayed in school without harassment, discrimination, or stigmatization from their peers.

Mr. Osei-Wusu encouraged the various branches of PPAG within the zone to reach out to more of such girls in their communities and ensure they remain in school and help the policy to succeed. The field implementing officer, Priscilla Adubea Adjei expressed gratitude to the United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA) for assisting PPAG to implement the project successfully. She noted that teenage mothers and their parents were also happy with the intervention. This is because all efforts to get their wards back to school failed because the girls complained they would be stigmatized by their peers, but UNFPA and

PPAG have successfully executed that. The parents praised the MOE, GES, PPAG and UNFPA for the policy and its implementation.

## **GOVERNMENT URGED TO IMPLEMENT EMPLOYMENT EQUITY PLAN**

The National Council of Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) has called on the government to implement the Employment Equity Policy (EEP) for transformative disability inclusion.

The (EEP) is a document designed under the Persons with Disability Act 2006 (Act 715) to address high unemployment situation among the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) in Ghana. The policy seeks to promote equal opportunities; inclusion and fair treatment in terms of employment through the elimination of discrimination and implementation of affirmative measures to reduce the disadvantages in employment experience by vulnerable groups. The Executive Director of PPAG, Madam Abena Adubea Amoah, addressing participants said, the Disability Act enjoins every employee, whether in the private or public sector, to employ PWDs once they have the capacity, saying sensitization was very important in the implementation of the policy as it would provide the needed impetus to scale it up.

The Executive Secretary of NCPD, Madam Esther Akua Gyemfi, in a speech read on her behalf by the Acting National Coordinator for the Regional Directorate of NCPD, Mr. Joshua Arddy, said that would ensure equitable representation of PWDs in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce.

Madam Gyemfi made the call during a stakeholders' engagement organized by the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG) in collaboration with the NCPD and Ministry of Employment and Labor Relation (MELP) on the draft of the EEP in Accra.





*Image: Participants after the programme*

The engagement, organized under the Promoting Equal Rights for Women and Girls with Disabilities (PERD) Project funded by the Dutch Embassy in Ghana, aimed to review the EEP document to be submitted to the MELR to facilitate the process for adoption by the government to address employment challenges among PWDs in the country.

Madam Gyemfi said research had shown that the employment rate for PWDs in Ghana was very low as compared to developing countries despite successive governments' interventions. "This is a step which Ghana has taken to ensure that we mainstream PWDs issues into national development, hence trying to ensure employment rate or PWDs increase", She added.

She said the policy applied to all companies set up under sections 2 and 33 of the Company's Act 2019 (Act 992) and the Public Service of Ghana as specified in Article 190 of the constitution, as well as to Public Corporations and Civil Society Organizations. The policy will require companies, ministries, departments, and agencies to inform management and employees of the policy, obtain the commitment and active support of all managers in order to ensure successful implementation and maintain all records.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY IS KEY IN PROVIDING SRHR SERVICES – PPAG**

Mr. Martin Anyoka, the Adolescent Girl Empowerment Programme Officer of the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG) in the Upper East Region, has reiterated the need for confidentiality in the provision of Sexual and Reproductive Health Services (SRHs) to adolescents. He said that would help curtail teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases among the youth.

Mr. Anyoka said the unfriendly approach to health services delivery at any health facility and service provision point could be a deterrent to clients and scare the youth away from seeking information and services for quality of their sexual life. The Adolescent Girl Empowerment Programme Officer said this in response to the low patronage of SRH Services by young girls leading to increasing teenage pregnancy challenge in the region.



He said the attitude and unfriendly behavior of service providers was a contributory factor to the challenge and indicated that as part of PPAG's effort to build confidence in adolescents to seek information and services, an innovation dubbed, "Know your Nurse, know your Client," in being implemented, where adolescents were taken on a visit to the health facilities to promote SRH Services. It is also for them to familiarize themselves with service providers to know the services available to them. Such visits offer young people the opportunity to seek clarification on their sexuality. Mr. Anoka explained that the program had started to increase the interest of the youth and built their confidence.

The Adolescent Girl Empowerment Programme, he said, was also designed to help adolescent girls make informed decisions about their sexuality and their future, by breaking the silence on norms that affect them. Other interventions being implemented by PPAG are

the provision of skill-based short-term training, to enable adolescent girls to earn income to take care of their needs instead of depending on men, projects on disability inclusion, maternal health and others.

**UNAIDS alerts countries to stop new HIV infections, end AIDS and prepare for future pandemics**

UNAIDS has urged countries to take full advantage of new opportunities to step up funding, expand new and proven HIV prevention technologies and remove barriers to HIV services. This was part of remarks made on the side-lines of the 76th World Health Assembly attended by Ministers of Health, global health leaders and experts at a high-level event of the Global HIV Prevention Coalition. Hosted by UNAIDS, the event was a call to increase political commitment, address policies and laws that drive inequalities and pandemics, secure additional funding and ensure effective HIV programming is implemented at scale.

In attendance for the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG) was Naadu Awuradwoa Addico, the Gender and Inclusion coordinator.





***Image: Participants at the event making various presentations***

According to Mitchell Warren, Co-chair of the Global HIV Prevention Coalition, noted that, “This is the best chance we’ve ever had, in probably the entire history of the AIDS pandemic, to reimagine HIV prevention and to do it with equity and with impact.”

According to the 2022 UNAIDS Global HIV Prevention Coalition country scorecards, dedicated HIV prevention Programmes for adolescent girls and young women only exist in 41% of districts with moderate to high HIV incidence in sub-Saharan Africa. Excerpts of statements read on behalf of the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana highlighted the urgency of HIV prevention among adolescent girls.

Many adolescent girls face poverty, disability, marginalization, discrimination and exploitation. These factors perpetuate HIV transmission and hinder an effective response to AIDS. PPAG called for policies and laws that allow girls to not only access HIV prevention services like PrEP, but also to complete their education regardless of their background and circumstances.

PPAG's statement appealed to Governments as well as global leaders, donors and all stakeholders to provide resources and commit to ensuring girls can have equal access to knowledge, support and safe spaces to remain HIV free.

Launched in 2017, the Global HIV Prevention Coalition (GPC) brought UNAIDS' Co-sponsors, civil society networks, funding partners and implementers together. The Coalition was established to accelerate progress on HIV prevention and ensure accountability for action, since countries were not on track to meet the 2016 UN General Assembly Political Declaration targets on HIV prevention.